

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
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R 111230Z APR 78
FM AMCONSUL OPORTO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1085
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PO
SUBJECT: COST OF LIVING PROTEST

REF: LISBON 2593

1. FOR BREAD AND THE CONSTITUTION. AN ESTIMATED 10,000 PARTICIPATED IN APRIL 8 AFTERNOON RALLY IN DOWNTOWN OPORTO TO PROTEST INCREASES IN THE COST OF LIVING. THE DEMONSTRATION COINCIDED WITH RISING PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER STIFF HIKES IN UTILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (REFTEL PARA 4) AND GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED FOOD PRICES. THE PROTEST WAS SPONSORED BY A GROUP OF LEFTIST WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS AND SUPPORTED BY THE PCP NORTHERN BRANCH AND OTHER ULTRA-LEFT PARTIES PLUS OVER 100 AREA TRADE UNIONS, WORKERS AND NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS AND COOPERATIVES. THE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA MILL CRANKED OUT WALL PAINTINGS, POSTERS AND FLYERS AND PUT SOUND TRUCKS IN OPORTO STREETS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE "ANTI-FASCIST AND ANTI-VELOSO" RALLY IN NOVEMBER, 1977. "WE WANT BREAD" AND "DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION" WERE AMONG THE RALLY SLOGANS.

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2. GUESS WHO'S BACK? ACCORDING TO AMCONSUL OBSERVERS, PARTICIPANTS WERE MOSTLY DRAWN FROM OPORTO LOW RENT DISTRICTS PLUS COMMUNIST YOUTH AND CGTP-INTERSINDICAL GROUPS. THERE WAS NO TENSION AND PRESS REPORTED NO INCIDENTS. LOPES CARDOSO, FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER, UNEXPECTEDLY JOINED MARCH WHICH ENDED RALLY. HE WAS CHEERED BY BYSTANDERS AND PARTICIPANTS. ALSO NOTABLE WAS THE APPEARANCE OF A LARGE

PHOTO OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES SUDDENLY
UNFURLED DURING THE MARCH. THE CROWD REACTED WITH HEAVY
APPLAUSE.

3. COMMENT. LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE APRIL 8 RALLY WAS WARM-UP
EXERCISE FOR APRIL 25 AND MAY 1 DEMONSTRATIONS. GIVEN THE
WIDE IMPACT OF THE LATEST PRICE INCREASES, COMMUNISTS
BE BE EXPECTED TO PROMOTE THE ANTI-AUSTERITY THEME FOR ALL
ITS WORTH. PENNER

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Message Attributes

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